

Summer 6-15-2007

## ENG 3009-001

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Dr. Wm. J. Searle

English 3009—sec.001—9:30 to 10:45—MTWThF—CH 3160

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Office Hours: Mon thru Fri: 10:45 to 11:15 and by appointment

The following texts are used for English 3009G:

William Buck. Trans. *Mahabharata*. New York, New York: Penguin/Meridian, 1987.

Alan Dundes. Editor. *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Berkeley, California: U. of Cal. Press, 1984.

Richard Erdoes and Alfonse Ortiz. Editors. *American Indian Myths and Legends*. New York, New York: Random/House/ Pantheon, 1984.

Hermann Hesse. *Siddhartha*. Trans. By Gilda Rosner. New York, New York: Bantam, 1951, rpt. 1971.

John Neihardt. *Black Elk Speaks*. Lincoln, Nebraska: U. of Nebraska Press, 1932, rpt. 1979,

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. By Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana U. Press, 1953. rpt. 1983.

Nancy K. Sandars. Trans. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. New York, New York: Penguin, 1960, rpt. 1972.

Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein*. New York, New York: Signet, 1831, rpt. 1963.

Barbara C. Sproul. *Primal Myths: Creation Myths Around the World*. San Francisco, California: Harper Collins, 1991.

**ATTENDANCE:** Plan to attend every class. You might glance at page 19 of the 2007-2008 catalog concerning this matter. Obviously, a student seldom does well in a course when he or she cuts class frequently. For that reason, I have established the following attendance policy. For every five unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered one letter grade. If you have ten unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered two letter grades, etc. Late papers (exams, quizzes, etc.) will be accepted only in cases of extreme emergency, severe illness, official university activity, or other urgent reasons.

**DEPARTMENTAL STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM:** “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random*

*House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty up to and including the immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

**GRADING:** Approximately 20 percent of your grade will consist of class participation (class discussion, group work, and perhaps a group project or two) and writing exercises (exclusive of out of class papers—as frequent reading check quizzes, etc.). More important, the classroom exercises, discussions, etc. will help you with exams and papers, the other 80 percent of your grade. There will be two one-hour exams, each worth 10 percent, and two short essays of a minimum of 1,000 words (approximately 4 typewritten pages double spaced) each worth 20 percent, and a final worth 20 percent. Of course, you are responsible for keeping up with reading and writing assignments, even if you are unable to attend class. In other words, a missed class is not an excuse for not being prepared on your return. Learn the assignment from a classmate or from your instructor. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** “Myth is a past with a future, exercising itself in the present,” writes Mexican author Carlos Fuentes. A constant among all peoples, a shared legacy of ancestral memories, perhaps a part of our very fiber, myth is, in part, the thread that binds a society (and societies) together, that which informs national identities and codes of moral conduct. So crucial are they, in fact, that people, even today, are willing to die for their myths.

Of course, we won’t go to that extent in our class. Our focus will be on the intersection between myth and culture as it is illustrated in some darn good reads. Anthropologists, psychologists, theologians, philosophers, literary theorists, etc. have all grappled with the term myth. So expect some treatment of theory and, where appropriate (and accessible), application to Mediterranean, Eastern, and American mythologies. Our quest (just couldn’t resist that word) should reveal the essential beliefs of other cultures and times their similarities with our own.

Class procedure will consist of very informal lecture and discussion periods, group work, and, when relevant, video. Grades will be based on class participation, occasional surprise reading check quizzes, two short papers, two one-hour exams, and a final.

- Wk #1—Mon. June 11—Introduction of course and assignment of texts; video, either an episode of the *X-Files* or *Buffy, The Vampire Slayer*.  
 Tues. “ 12—Group work on the video and grappling with the definition of myth, from *Sacred Narrative*, Honko’s “The Problem of Myth,” pages 41-52.

### Unit #1: Mediterranean Mythologies

“...we need myths to determine and to evaluate the various facts presented to us. We need myths to answer the questions, “Who am I? How do I fit into the world of society and nature? How should I live?”  
 --Barbara C. Sproul, American Scholar of Myth

- Wed. “ 13—Near Eastern Mythology: “The Enuma Elish,” pages 91-113 in *Primal Myths*, quiz?  
 Thurs. “ 14—*Epic of Gilgamesh*, pages 61-96, graded group work. Glossary in back of text.  
 Fri. “ 15—*Epic of Gilgamesh*, pages 97-117, Genesis handout distributed.

“In its fullest expression, the case for myth is universal; myth has a life of its own, and with it own spiritual sources, keeps finding clever ways of using every kind of human making to spread its potency.”  
 --Sean Kane, American Scholar of Myth

- Wk #2—Mon. June 18—Judeo-Christian mythology: from *Primal Myths*, creation: pages 123-126; chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis, quiz? Video “Who Wrote the Bible?”  
 Tues. “ 19—From Genesis handout, chapters 3, 4, 6-9, and 11; quiz? optional reading, from *Sacred Narrative*, Fraser’s “The Fall of Man,” pages 72-97.  
 Wed. “ 20—The Abraham story, from the Genesis handout; quiz? Video on the Abraham story and Genesis. Handout on Hesiod’s *Theogony* distributed.  
 Thurs. “ 21—Assignment of theme #1: Student conferences on papers from 11:00 AM to 3:00 or 4:00 PM for the next six days.  
 Fri. “ 22—Graeco-Roman mythology: Hesiod’s *Theogony*, quiz? Video?

“A myth is a symbolic story which demonstrates in Alan Watts’ words, ‘the inner meaning of the universe and of human life.’”—Andrew Greely, priest and novelist

- Wk #3—Mon. June 25—Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Book I, graded group work; perhaps video on Greek/Roman myth  
 Tues. “ 26—excerpts from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*

Wk #3 (cont.)

Wed. June 27—conclude Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; study guide for exam #1 distributed.

Unit #2: Eastern Mythologies (Hinduism and Buddhism)

"And the pervading purposes of our mythmaking ancestors, all down the centuries, has been to awaken us."—Alexander Eliot, American Art Historian

Thurs. " 28—excerpts from the *Mahabharata* (MBH), video

Fri. " 29—Exam #1 (on Mediterranean mythologies)

"Myth embodies the nearest approach to truth that can be stated in words."

--A.K. Coomarswamy, Indian Philosopher

Wk #4—Mon. July 2—Theme #1 due—one point extra for all turned in early or on time. Exam #1 returned.

Excerpts from MBH, graded group work.

Tues. " 3—excerpts from MBH, graded group work, video?

Wed. July 4-----**NO CLASS—INDEPENDENCE DAY OBSERVANCE**

Thurs. " 5—MBH, video

Fri. " 6—Theme #1 returned; Theme #2 assigned: conferences on student Papers from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM for the next several days.

"Myths are regarded as a random collection of stories. In a culture there is a clear correlation between the distribution of mythic themes and what is considered socially relevant in that culture."

--Lauri Honko, Finnish Folklorist

Wk #5—Mon. July 9—Conclude MBH

Tues. " 10—Hesse's *Siddhartha*, video, handouts, Study Guide for Exam #2 distributed.

Wed. " 11—Hesse's *Siddhartha*, graded group work

Thurs. " 12—Hesse's *Siddhartha*, quiz?

Fri. " 13—Exam #2 (on MBH and *Siddhartha*)

Unit #3: Modern Mythologies

“Certainly science, like so many of the earlier myths, appears to explain the natural world around us. But science can only answer *how* things happen; it is unable to tell us *why*.”

--J. F. Bierli, American Scholar of Myth

Wk #6—Mon. July 16—Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

Tues “ 17—Theme #2 due—one point extra credit for all essays turned in early or on time; graded group work

““You are my creator, but I am your master; obey.””

--from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

Wed. “ 18—Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*; Study Guide for final distributed.

Thurs. “ 19—Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

Fri. “ 20—FINAL EXAM—EMPHASIS ON *FRANKENSTEIN*